

# Japan Christian Activity News

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## A VIGIL OF SOLIDARITY

Every year for the last 23 years, Japanese and Korean Christians in Japan have gathered on the first of March in solidarity with, and to pray for, their South Korean sisters and brothers. It was on this day in the year 1919 that the people of all of Korea rose up to declare to Japan and the world that they had not been conquered by Japan.

This year, once again, people assembled in the Tokyo Shinanomachi Church for an evening of prayer and remembrance. Shigeko Yamano presented an update on the South Korean situation, which has deteriorated gravely during the past year. Once again, the South Korean people themselves are proving their willingness to suffer for their freedom.

Ryosuke Yasue, the editor of SEKAI magazine, discussed the use of violence and torture as carried out by the present South Korean government, calling the situation virtual military rule. He mourned for the South Korean people, who, formerly under Park and now under Chun, have had to endure this terrible oppressive situation for more than 20 years. The tragic twist is that the present regime has used a few years of leniency and the people's patriotism to spur them on to work for the "prosperity of the economy" and the 1988 Olympics. But now legal

protests are being crushed by the police. As with any military government, no rivals can be tolerated, justice only means winning so any method can be permitted to destroy the "enemy". Since South Korea is the first line of defense for Japan, and an economic resource for the United States, the forcible suppression of legitimate political activities is effectively encouraged by the silence of both nations.

Yasue also took a moment to critique journalism in Japan. In South Korea the article revealing the fact that the police had tortured to death a young student was published at great risk. Yet here in Japan where journalists are supposedly free, they published only official statements even though other sources were available. He cited the fact that the mass of material published on South Korea for the most part, illustrates the failure of Japanese journalism to seek answers beyond the obvious. What is happening in South Korea is a challenge to journalists to ask why, and to courageously fulfill their obligation to publish the truth.

In his sermon, Rev. Masaaki Nakajima spoke on Corinthians II 5:16-21, which calls Christians to be ambassadors of reconciliation. Our history, he said, reveals how little we have done, how little we even know, of the methods needed, or of the necessity such a call

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brings, to suffer with those who desire reconciliation and seek to be reconciled.

The evening was one of deep reflection and prayer. Those present felt solidarity with the South Korean people as they recognized their need to emulate the commitment of the South Korean people to freedom, to justice, and thus to true peace.

by- Sr. Jean Fallon

### JAPAN'S SOCIAL UNDERBELLY

Once again this year as winter came on, the 18th annual special action group for and with day laborers, was organized in Kamagasaki, Osaka. Aged and sick people are not able to get work even though they may wish for work. Without money they have no other way but to sleep on the streets only with the company of their harsh alcoholic drinks. Sometimes they are attacked by young juvenile offenders and suffer physical injuries as a result. In order to care for these people of the streets during the winter, twice each night help rendering patrols go out in the area. The patrols are composed of day-laborers and their supporters. One group provides medical care and another group provides protection from the ravages of the cold winter weather. Besides these action groups there is a corner in the park set aside to care for people who have medical problems and to provide counselling. Also food and recreation are provided. The city administration's policy of refurbishing the area has had the result of spreading needy people over wider areas of the city even beyond Kamagasaki. On January 3, 1987, about 350 laborers and supporters were out

on help rendering patrols in search of needy people. The Osaka police sent out several task force units in order to prevent those patrolling from providing help. The police task force units surrounded the help giving groups and started to use violence against the women and laborers among them. Ten people among the non-violent patrol teams were arrested. Three of the ten were supporters of the day-laborers.

Even though efforts have been made for release of the arrested people through the work of sympathetic lawyers, the Osaka district court ordered 10 days detention for 5 of the people arrested, on grounds of disturbing traffic, and for 3 on the grounds of violation of public safety regulations. All arrested declared their right to remain silent. For a total of 7 hours they were interrogated. During the time that they were arrested their homes were searched and the suppression by the police extended to families and the schools of the supporters. Those arrested were all finally released on their own recognizance. The laborers of Kamagasaki have provided an essential and important working force in the creation of the present economic system.

For the national police agency, these actions by the labor unions and supporters may not be a welcomed trend for these people in the unions do not remain on charity and are willing to work for other needy people. They are also willing to question the problems of Kamagasaki as part of the totality of social issues that should become the agenda for the Christian churches and the nation as said churches and Christians seek to become



agents for responsible but meaningful social change. The Christian Cooperative Friends (Kyoyukai) continues to patrol the area and work among people throughout the year.

by- The Rev. Takashi Hori

### BEING OPENED TO GOD

On February 10 to 12, 1987, the committee on Handicapped People and the Church of the National Christian Council in Japan, held its 6th annual seminar on "Empowerment and the Faith" in Tokyo. Nationwide, 40 participants came to be involved in the seminar. The Rev. Akira Kanekiyo said in the conference; "We are not talking about how handicapped people are to be saved but rather about how the church can become the Body of Christ more fully with and for handicapped people.

Of the personal sharing in the conference the Rev. Toshiaki Hori told of his experience as a patient under treatment for manic-depressive psychosis and how he became a pastor by overcoming alcoholism and other physical problems.

"After studying at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary I am to become in the spring of the year, the assistant pastor of the Kochi (Shikoku Island) Church. If I had not had this mental sickness I would most likely be continuing in my prideful climbing of the social ladder which goes supposedly upward through the normal course taken by the so-called elite in this society. Because of my incurable sicknesses I was able to find the power of Christ in my weaknesses and was helped by so many people to be a follower of Christ.

After one year of marriage I was divorced from my wife, because the Christian ethic of the time was such that mentally sick persons were pressured into not having children. I lost confidence in living and felt a complete negation of my existence. I started to drink and sought to find an outlet through death. I became an alcoholic. The pastor of the Kochi Church who was trying to help me, said; "If you stop drinking and turn your efforts to counseling others who have the same problem, you will do more meaningful work than all the preaching that I have ever done from the pulpit on Sunday mornings." His words gave me a light by which I could see the ever unchanging reality of God's love and I felt through this that I could once again gain the power to live more creatively.

I went to church school when I was a child but after high school I acted much as if I were an atheist. My decision to quit drinking was beaten back twice by an uncontrollable urge but because of the pastor's words; "I will not give up because of this!", I was very greatly encouraged. When I lost everything and thereby accepted the thorn in my flesh, I gained the whole power of our Lord. Now I am able to accept the thorn in my flesh as a blessing that allowed me to meet Jesus.

There is so much discrimination against the powerless. We have physical weaknesses, as well as social and economic disabilities. But we can find strength in our weaknesses.

I was planning to create a group for people suffering from mental illnesses in which such people would be able to live together in the belief that

human beings do not live by bread alone. Ishigaki Island.

About this time I came under the duress of another physical sickness in which my body was not able to control its high cholesterol levels to the same degree possible with a normal person. I was advised by my doctor that I must loose as much as 20 kilograms. There were two reactions from me. One was that at last I will be released from my mental sickness, but at the same time it was a very difficult task for me to loose this much weight. I thought I should be able to eat what I enjoyed. But the inner voice guided me toward becoming a follower of Jesus. I went to seminary and decided to make every effort to live the Gospel through the encouragement and witness of Saint Paul and the life of Martin Luther, both of whom suffered similar thorns in their flesh. Because of this thorn in my flesh I gained new power to pray and have come to believe that God's love is shown to us, in and through our weaknesses."

#### LIFE OR DEATH- ISHIGAKI ISLAND

Just as my brother, sister and I were leaning on the concrete sea break scanning the aquamarine horizon of the East China Sea, Setsuko Yamazato and her dog, Lolo, whizzed up on a red scooter.

My exclamation, "You are just the person we were looking for!", was met by, "That's nice, but who are you?"

I told her that my brother and his wife had come from China and I had come from Osaka to check on the situation here on

Setsuko, who my Okinawan friends in Kansai had told me to contact, simply replied, "You've come to the right place."

And apparently we had come to the right person.

Setsuko returned here to her home country nine years ago when she heard about the plan to build a "mini-Narita" (massive airport facility) directly over the precious coral reefs near the village of Shiraho. She has dedicated every day since, working to save the life-style, traditions and nature of this fishing-farming village, all of which depend on coral.

The coral reef, also known as the 'oasis of the sea' is an eco-system thriving with and on many plankton and planula varieties, lush sea foliage, and a myriad of fish species all of which provide the villagers with their life-blood - not to mention the sheer beauty of the coral which I had witnessed as I went snorkeling among the schools of multi-colored fish.

Although the sea has been generous to Ishigaki islanders, history has not been nearly as kind. We learned that in 1500 Ishigaki island was invaded by force from Shuri, the capital of the Ryukyu Kingdom on Okinawa and was quickly conquered. Shuri control lasted a century until 1609 when Japan invaded the Ryukyu Kingdom and instituted severe policies throughout the archipelago. By 1659, what has been called the most brutal taxation system ever devised, had transformed the island into a great forced labor camp.

The weakened people suffered



from natural disasters and sicknesses while in 1771 the largest tsunami (tidal wave) on record swept across the island depositing blocks of coral the size of houses on the mountains. In the village of Shiraho, where the new airport facility is to be built, only 28 of the 1,484 inhabitants survived that calamity.

Not to be outdone by nature, in the 1950's during the U.S. occupation of Okinawa, the government seized Ishigaki land forcing many islanders off their holdings for the construction of U.S. military bases.

Malaria took its toll in 1945, with over 3,500 people perishing from Ishigaki and the surrounding islands, as civilians were forced to evacuate their homes during the heavy U.S. bombings of Ishigaki, and take refuge in the mosquito-infested mountains. In a classic case of over-kill, malaria was thoroughly eradicated in 1961 when the U.S. military sprayed the island with tons of DDT killing off most village pets and coating house rafters with a deadly platina that hasn't worn off in 26 years.

Nature bounced back in 1971, with Typhoon Bess striking after a six-month drought which had wiped out ninety percent of the island's crops.

An amazing history, and now Ishigaki faces its next crisis, one that threatens both its humanity and its natural ecosystem. Contemplating these things, I head toward the beach and sit with the fishermen around the driftwood fire, scattered bones telling me I was too late for the stew made from their morning's catch.

Joining them in my first cup of

awamori (Ryukyu Rice Whisky), we toast and in that instant I decide that it must be the release and relief songs and festivals which have sustained these vital people. Each night, women holding grandchildren, and muscle-rippled men with five of six decades behind them, outlast me singing and dancing under the stars accompanied by the ever-twanging sanshin (Okinawan shamisen).

The scene is exactly the same - the sanshin strings vibrate and their mouths move, but all that can be heard are the screaming jets overhead....

....the squealing teapot brings me to reality - another day, another battle, what the villagers refer to as "the war."

The combatants are the villagers of Shiraho, other Ishigaki islanders, and a domestic grass-roots and international solidarity network versus the construction companies, airport planners, and the Japanese government under pressure from the U.S. State Department. The former are fighting for their beloved sea, their livelihood, and the last remaining coral reefs in the Japanese archipelago; the latter for profits, increased tourism, another precedent-making victory over citizens' movements, and the southwestern tip of Japan's sea-lane military strategy - the unpublicized motivation for construction of this super-length airstrip. Weapons held by the former are public awareness and pressure through signature campaigns, protest letters, demonstrations, court cases, lobbying and international opinion. The latter wield economic clout, information and research

monopolizing, corruptible  
officials, and police-backed  
authority.

## COURT AND CONSTITUTION

On January 28, 1987, the first day of a two-week coral survey carried out by a so-called private team hired by the airport-supportive Okinawa prefectural government; some fishermen, women, dogs and children gathered on the beach to protest. Misjudging, the police arrested the respected village head and a lawyer, thinking that the opposition would crumble and instead brought wide-spread sympathy and publicity. The questionable survey, which was guarded by four coast guard boats and anywhere from fifteen to thirty fully-armed riot-police, is over, and further surveys and environmental issues must be faced before permission to build is granted.

In one sense, the outcome of this fight is not nearly as important as the extent to which every one of us recognizes these so-called "local issues" as our issues.

On the other hand, the struggle in Ishigaki is significant, not just in terms of saving the sea and a people's livelihood, but in terms of proving that steps can be made through the democratic pressure of concerned world citizens to halt the destructive march of profit-hungry enterprises and to curb the militarization of Japan - a country its leader calls "an unsinkable aircraft carrier."

by Andrew C. Bartlett, Korean Christian Center (KCC)

Ishigaki  
Island



In order to provide support for the 15 plaintiffs who lost the constitutional fight in the Morioka District Court on March 5th, 1987, the Japan NCC sent a statement, approved by the 8th NCC Executive Committee, as a means of renewing their commitment to the fight for the freedom of religion that is guaranteed by the Constitution.

The purpose of the suit filed in the Morioka District Court was to clarify whether or not State and/or local government and public offices retain the right under the constitution to become involved in the support of particular religions. It is impossible for us to accept the March 5th court decision based on the following three points.

1. Article 20 of the Constitution of Japan (the clause declaring the separation of Religion and State) was interpreted in such a way as to allow the Prime Minister to take part in ceremonies at the Yasukuni Shinto Shrine in an official capacity, without such being a violation of said separation principle.

2. The decision handed down by the court is based on the presupposed impossibility of separating official capacity from private capacity but within modern democracies public and private functions must be separated. Further the court in its decision ignored the expert testimony of most professional witnesses from various fields such as the constitution, religion, and history.

3. The court determined that



monetary offerings of "Tamagushi" (a new branch of the sacred tree to gods) by the public organizations is only based on social etiquette or courtesy and therefore these offerings of public funds in this manner to the Yasukuni Shinto Shrine are acceptable within this framework. This definition of the constitution is only another indication of the way in which the decision of the court allows blessings from the state toward the particular religion favored by those in political power. This also violates the principle of separation of religion and state.

March 12, 1987

WCTU - HELP!



The following letter was sent on February 5, 1987, by the WCTU to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines:

It is a great joy for us to know that the Philippine people have made a new beginning under the leading of God's grace.

The Japan Woman's Christian Temperance Union is the first women's organization in Japan with one hundred years of history. Our primary goal throughout these 100 years has been and continues to be the pursuit of human rights for women. In order to commemorate 100 years of this work and to meet the needs of women in other Asian countries the HELP (House of Emergency in Love and Peace) agency was established in Japan on April 1, 1986 as a shelter for expatriate Asian women.

After discussing the issues of women's joint planning for the year 2000, we have come to the

realization that the Official Development Aid programs of the Japanese government have a very important role to play in your country, and this development aid is very deeply related to issues and concerns regarding the human rights of women. Therefore, on December 10, 1986 which is Human Rights Day, we, in concert with non-governmental organizations, presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Japanese Government, a list of our demands. One of our demands is that Official Development Aid for Asian countries must be used to meet the needs of people and the development of human potential, especially in relation to women and children who are living in poverty. However, to our demands in this regard, Ministry officials indicated that our charge could not be met, for the ODA program is carried out not by our government but by your government.

We strongly hope that Japan's ODA programs for the Philippines will be used not only for large scale industrial development projects, but also for the support of programs which will benefit women and children in Philippine society who are in desperate need of human potential development. At the same time we do believe that such programs will be of greater effect if they are carried out in cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

We pray for the Philippine government that it will be able to create a new society for the people of the Philippines.

Kazuko Tanikawa, President of JWCTU



## APARTHEID JAPANESE STYLE

Early in the morning of March 10, 1987, Ms. Song-Ok Kim was arrested because of her refusal, as of April 4, 1985, to be fingerprinted for alien registration purposes as required by the Japanese Alien Registration Law. This action on the part of the police was unexpected. When the police came to her home in Kawasaki, she was sleeping and was awakened by the sound of her husband speaking to the police. She was ordered to go to the police station on March 9, but on that day, she and her one and three year old children were sick. She had indicated to the police through her lawyer the reason why she was not able to go to the police station on the appointed day.

Quickly she changed her clothes. When she was taken into the police car there were 10 policemen around. She was surprised at the unrealistic and even foolish action of so many policemen who had come to her door to arrest a woman with two small children. During the investigation the police were aware of her sickness and took her to the hospital. She was handcuffed while she was waiting her turn to be called in to see the doctor.

During the police interrogations, because of her refusal to be fingerprinted she had to explain to the police with tears in her eyes why having prints made of all ten fingers as a 14 year old is such a frightening and dehumanizing experience.

What gave her strength during the interrogations was the sound of the Korean drums beating outside as her friends and

supporters prayed for a society in which their children would have a future free of the apartheid style fingerprint system that exists in today's Japan.

At 4 PM on the same day she was released. The chief of the police station said to her, "It is good that you are being released." Her reply was, "It's not good at all, if you would like I will stay longer!" At the front gate to the police station those same 10 policemen who had come to arrest her, greeted her by saying, "Thanks for the effort." At that time she was convinced that there was great uneasiness on the part of people carrying out the letter of the law and that those who had arrested her were also feeling sad and ill at ease because of what they had to do to her. This may mean that the anti-fingerprinting movement is already heading for victory.

By Akie Hatazawa

Mr. Kim Myoung Shik published his new book, SHIMON KYOHI NO SHISO (Thoughts on Fingerprint Refusal). Published by Akashi Shobo, the book contains poems, essays and roundtable discussions that were part of his life while he was studying at the International Christian University in Tokyo and faced the possibility of deportation because of his refusal to submit to fingerprinting as required under the Alien Registration Law. He is leaving Japan for South Korea in April.

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